

INTERVIEW NO. 28 -

November 26, 1957

"What do I wish to do? One could almost write a book about it. The last book I wrote was fourteen years ago, and I think a good deal of my hopes were started there. If I had the time, I would write another book on what sort of future India I would like to see.

"First of all, I am trying to give most Indians the primary necessities of life. One wants to give them a much higher standard of living. It must be given to all people, which means that we must build up India's production of the good things of life. There may be differences of opinion on how to do it, but there is complete agreement that it needs to be done. There are two points I would like to stress briefly:

"(1) How to do it means effective economic policies and the like. Part of this is a technological problem; part a matter of new incentives and desires for a better life.

"(2) The village people are the majority in our country. We must bring them face to face with what is called modern technological, scientific, and industrial progress, without uprooting them from the soil. There is no formula for it. It is a matter of trial-and-error, for no people can be uprooted without great injury. You can transplant an individual, but not a whole people. Rootlessness means uncreativity and superficiality.

"The problem we are faced with is how to combine what is valuable in India's past experience with modern scientific and industrial methods and thought. We must do it by trial-and-error because you cannot use 400 million people as if they were bricks and mortar. They are people, with all the sensibilities of the human being, eager to get along and to do the right thing, and restricted through no fault of their own because they were born Indian. We want the Indian people to grow in individuality. We believe in the dignity and in the importance of the human being.

"Even when I was in prison I never hated the British people. I hated the power that certain individuals had over others. Human beings must not have power over others, else they will misuse it. Even in your country, technology is running away with the machine, while the essence of civilized living, humanism, is being pushed back. We want technology, and we want it badly, but we do not want to lose our values of humanness and human understanding by the machine operating only for itself rather than for people.

"Even fourteen years ago, in my last book, I said that the Americans and the Russians are the two most dynamic peoples in the world today, and they represent the two peoples whom I admire the most. Both peoples attract me because of their dynamism -- their belief in progress. I have been in both Russia and the United States, and I have been impressed by the similarities between the two peoples. Both are missionaries, trying to convert the rest of the world to their particular religious way of life; both are trying to save humanity. Both accept the same assumptions about the mechanical and technological age. Both have a great reverence and awe of science and discovery. Both have made a great thing out of education, and both are friendly and want to be liked; but they want the rest of the world to be like them before they can be liked. I was terribly impressed by the new education in Russia. In science it is very thorough and exhaustive; I doubt whether their system of technical education can be bettered. The students are compelled to work very hard, and although their lines are narrow, it is thorough. Most Russian education is a bit reactionary. Literature is studied thoroughly, but it is the literature of the past rather than the present. Their music has been stifled, and their painting is nothing but photographic realism. Russia is a country for the scientist; not the humanist.

"I think that education in Russia is changing the whole people. They will not be the same as their grandfathers or their fathers. You must remember that a whole generation under fifty has been trained since the Russian revolution. The Russians, like the Americans, are mechanically minded, and there has been a good deal of imitation of America in architecture, management and industry. Russia is trying to be like America, for America is its ideal. Broadly, the younger generation, trained since the revolution, want personal freedom and more of the good things of life. Personal freedom and the amenities are really prized by them, and sooner or later the Russian government must provide these. The Americans are different from the Russians, but both share the same sort of self-conceit; both look upon themselves as near perfect. Both countries have the same unifying conformism, encouraged by mass public opinion; or should I say that it is public opinion in America which forces all to be in the same mold, while in Russia it is the police and the fear of stringent punishment, from Ivan's day on.

"The Americans became unified during the nineteenth century. I think it is wonderful that different peoples, creeds and races should have been unified so that they accept the same point of view on institutions.

Interview No. 28 - p. 3

I am sure that there are few Americans who would want to change to another system. America has had the pioneer mentality, of blazing trails, of huge expanses of land ready to be occupied by the first man who could fill it. It is a complex of hardness and softness combined. There is a terribly self-centered quality, which was even noticed by Dickens, plus a curious looking to Europe with nostalgia to be accepted by the upper groups and the educated groups in London and Paris. There was a striving to buy culture there, or to absorb it, and yet in America the American did a good deal of trail-blazing. He cut himself away from feudalism, but at the same time to unify his society, he made it terribly uniform. It must be difficult to be intellectually free in a society tyrannized by mass public opinion.

"Isolationist before World War I and World War II, America woke up to the fact that she was like Atlas carrying the world on her shoulders. More Americans went abroad, but they saw nothing because the American has lost his sense of receptivity. Wherever he goes, he carries his shell with him, and as a result he doesn't know how to understand the person different from himself, and he has lost the human faculty of knowing how others are feeling and why. The crusader is not a very tolerant person. Essentially, Americans are not philosophers. They are doers and men of action. As a result they get shock after shock from the rest of the world because something is being done which doesn't conform to their point of view. Then they go through agonizing appraisals and reappraisals.

"India and America have a good deal in common. America is admired by most Indians, and you have undoubtedly seen how friendly most Indians are to Americans. India has lived in a shell for at least one thousand years, with a caste system which has isolated most Indians from their fellow Indians. They were quite content with their world, and like the Chinese they thought they were on the pinnacle of thought and all that was good and perfect. India is the reverse of you. She is not a crusader. Take religion, for example. Although the Indian conforms to it, he is exclusive rather than a missionary. In this respect he is like the orthodox Jew, who thought in terms of his pots and pans; whom he could eat with, what he should eat, and whom he should associate with, and so on. But the Hindu differed from the Jew because he was essentially pagan. You can have whatever gods you like provided you don't interfere with the life of the community. Yet they are also very narrow-minded and pay no attention to the rest of the world; they are insulated in their

Interview No. 28 - p. 4

smug shells. Philosophically, the Indian can believe in six orthodox philosophies, many of which are contradictory to the others in which he believes. You can start a seventh or an eighth or a ninth if you want to. In India you have intellectual freedom but not social freedom. Because the Indians lived in these shells, they became very passive toward the present and the decadent. It is only now that they are beginning to come out of this lethargy.

"I know that people feel that India relies upon me to guide her to the future. I don't think it is a good thing that a country must rely on two or three people. It is far better to have each person play a role in bettering India. I realize, of course, that people look at me as one of the links with the past struggle for independence and our contemporary struggle for a new India. In most revolutions -- excepting the American, of course -- the leaders are generally killed. Because of Gandhi's peaceful approach, we survived. Mentally we started off as the mentors of a resurging India, and this role is still ours. We are the links between the last generation and the next one.

"I must say that I am very much impressed with the quality of the younger generation. The young women, especially, impress me with their high degree of intelligence and capabilities. There has really been a revolution in India regarding women. Over one-third of the college students here in Delhi are young women and in many ways they are brighter than the men students. These young people are coming out of their shells, but I don't want them to break loose and cut their moorings with the past. There is still a good deal of conservatism among them, but I am certain that the moderate tendencies will triumph in the long run. You see, if we had had to have a plebiscite on women's rights, they would never have been passed. But we pushed them through our Parliament. We gave the women equal rights in terms of marriage, divorce and inheritance. We gave the women the same equal footing legally and politically as men. Despite thousands of years of oppression of women, we got these restrictions removed with no clamor from the conservatives or the orthodox. If we had not led but had waited for a plebiscite, they would never have gone through. My hope is that women, through education, will be the revolutionaries for the next generation, since their role as mothers and educators is of such importance.

"There is a gradual and perceptible change which has taken place since independence as a result of our system of education. We are bringing in the machine, and I hope that its influence will be moderated with

Interview No. 28 - p. 5

humanism. The processes are the same here as in China, but we are doing it much slower than China. Here we follow the democratic way. The opposition gets up continuously to criticize us, and it is permitted as well as encouraged to express its point of view. The English language newspapers criticize us, but you ought to read the newspapers in Hindi, or Bengali or Punjabi -- they curse us and revile us in no mild terms.

"I react personally against the cold war. It is such an uncomfortable way of existence. I can understand precautions which nations need to take for their defense, but I cannot approve of the hatred which goes with this type of cold war -- it is suspicion and hatred leaning on the modern weapons of war. I don't know when a madman may start a conflagration that will engulf the entire world. When Khrushchev was here in India he told me that he wanted me to be the intermediary between the Russians and the Americans. I replied that it was necessary for the Communists to abolish their hate, for every time you pick up a Communist newspaper there is hatred on each line, and it is a burning kind. I had also heard Khrushchev damn the British in very hostile terms. I told him that we could have no peace unless all nations are willing to forget the past and start anew with friendship and understanding. Khrushchev replied that what I said was true, but after all it was necessary to understand that Russia has lived in a state of siege for over forty years, and that is why she is so suspicious. But I am not too sure that Czarist Russia hasn't survived in the modern Communist state. The Russians are conformist and anarchist at the same time, and one sees that in the top Communists.

"I am convinced that no people wants war. We in India cannot build ourselves up in a world which is perpetually threatening the peace. We must have peace for our own efforts. A world in which all the Americans see is the Russian enemy, and world in which the Russians see only the American enemy is not a pleasant place for India to be in. We want the friendship and understanding of all nations. We cannot take sides without losing our principles and our need not to be embroiled in power politics."

Approved For Release 1999/08/24 : CIA-RDP78-02771R000500060006-2

AEDS

Approved For Release 1999/08/24 : CIA-RDP78-02771R000500060006-2